



Exploring The Small Farm Dream

**5-session courses to be offered in Amherst and Marlborough
Massachusetts 2012-13**

**Amherst 2013 dates: 2/6, 2/13, 2/20, 2/27 Graduation 3/6
Marlborough 2013 dates: 2/19, 2/26, 3/5, 3/12 Graduation 3/19**

Are you considering starting an agricultural enterprise in Massachusetts? In this course you will:

- Test the feasibility of your idea before you invest
- Evaluate self employment and the suitability of an agricultural lifestyle
- Investigate markets for your proposed product or service
- Identify regulations that will impact your planned enterprises
- Understand the unique risks associated with agriculture
- Determine your financial break even date
- Evaluate the realistic contribution you can expect from this piece of your livelihood
- Test whether others share your vision and want to join/support you in this pursuit
- Anticipate threats to your success
- Decide what's next in order to get going now, do more preparation, or avoid a big mistake

The Explorer Program is intended for those who are considering farming as a (small) business. Its purpose is to help pre-venture, aspiring farmers learn what it will take to start and manage their own agricultural enterprise. *Explorer* makes use of four guided group sessions and a farmer panel of those who have already done what you are contemplating. It is based on an acclaimed workbook and is presented by instructors experienced in starting ag businesses. *Explorer* was created to help you articulate the clear vision and goals you will need to guide a new agricultural venture.

Participant Quotes:

- "It makes you very aware of all the components that make up an ag business. I was forced to develop a realistic plan which was very beneficial."

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- “It will teach you new stuff, increase your network, confirm your intentions, etc.”
- “Absolutely the best money I have spent in a long time – really helped dispell myths and the ‘romance’ of farming, which needs to happen if an ag business is going to succeed.”
- “Makes you think about all the things that we never even considered when we were dreaming about our farm”
- “The people in the class have loads of experience to share and the structure of weekly assignments gets things done.”
- “Very grounding and lots of resources – good reality check.”

Course Structure:

This course is sponsored by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) Agricultural Business Training Program, in cooperation with the *Explorer* curriculum creator, the New England Small Farm Institute (NESFI) in Belchertown.

Class size is limited to 12 prospective farms to maximize group time, with the opportunity to bring another person from your enterprise if space allows. Meetings are once per week and generally from 6:00-9:00 PM. The registration cost of **\$125** includes instruction, all materials, guest speakers and a session of Q&A with a panel of varied-stage farmers.

You must have email , basic word processing and spread sheet software, and internet access to take this course! You must also agree to attend all 5 sessions.

We encourage you to apply early because we often must defer participants to another year due to full courses. Once we have the final dates and locations, we will notify you that the course is a go. If you have vacations or other non-emergency conflicts with the final dates, you will need either to have an alternate attend for you on that night or wait until the next available course.

For a Registration Form, please visit the agricultural business training (ABTP) section MDAR website or contact:

Rick Chandler, MDAR, 101 University Drive, Suite C-4, Amherst, MA 01002

Email: rick.chandler@state.ma.us

Out of state applicants

This course is sponsored and financially supported by a Massachusetts state agency and is intended for new Massachusetts agricultural entrepreneurs. If you are from a neighboring state that does not offer Explorer, or are planning to farm in another state, we can put you on a waiting list in case the course does not fill with in-state candidates.